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REPORT

OF THE

COMMISSIONER PUBLIC WORKS

AND

INTERNAL IMPROVEMENTS.

REPORT.

OFFICE COM. PUB. WORKS AND INT. IMPROVEMENTS,
LITTLE ROCK, *December 15, 1870.*

To His Excellency POWELL CLAYTON,
Governor State of Arkansas:

DEAR SIR: I have the honor to report the business of the department of Public Works and Internal Improvements in a state of forwardness, which, considering the drawbacks incident to the political condition of the country two years ago, and the monetary stringency which has borne so heavily upon all branches of industry since the closing of our late civil war, gives promise of a result highly favorable to the farther development of the agricultural and commercial interests of our State, by the carrying out of an extended system of public works.

RAILROADS.

One of the most prominent improvements demanding the attention of any people, is that of a better means of travel and transportation than those afforded by lakes, rivers and the rude roadways opened by pioneers through the forests and over the valleys and hills.

The industry and scientific research of mankind has brought to comparative perfection, to supply this great want of speedy and ample intercommunication, the railway system.

Most of the other States have, for many years past, as your Excellency is well aware, availed themselves to a considerable extent of this grand system; leaving this State almost alone in the background, with the meager amount, before the war, of less than one hundred miles of iron rails laid within its borders.

The liberal aid, so unanimously voted by the people of the

State two years ago, has greatly stimulated the building of railroads in the State, and, having made an inspection of the lines in process of construction to which the State granted aid, I have the honor to report their progress as per statement herewith marked "A."

I am favorably impressed with the energy displayed by the companies having these works in charge, and see no reason to doubt, that when five years shall have passed since the Railroad Incorporation and the Railroad Aid Laws came into force, the State will have been opened to the world by lines of railroad passing into and through at least thirty of its counties.

LEVEES.

The levee works of the State have also demanded extensive outlay and attention during the past two years; for a statement of these works I have the honor to refer you to the accompanying table (see statement marked "B.") The whole extent of works of this nature in process of construction by the State, comprising levees, railroad beds answering the purpose of levees, cut-offs, and other works securing lands from overflow, being about one hundred and sixty-seven miles of linear extent. The whole number of miles of completed work being about fifty-three.

The laws under which these works have been constructed, are, the act of the General Assembly of 1868-9, entitled "An act providing for the building and repairing of the public levees of this State, and for other purposes," and, the act supplementary thereto. These laws are in the main good and efficient, but contain some clauses, which, in their practical working prove detrimental to the proper and efficient carrying on of these important works, and to the interests of the State.

I respectfully represent that further legislation is necessary in this direction, in order that the State may reap the benefits designed to be secured by these enactments.

The act referred to above, entitled "An act providing for the building and repairing of the public levees of this State and for other purposes," approved March 16, 1869, provides

(sections 6, 7, 8, 9) for the issue of Auditor's swamp land warrants running thirty years, and bearing an annual interest at the rate of 8 per cent. Section six of this law provides, that said warrants shall be receivable in payment for swamp and overflowed lands, at the rate of one dollar and twenty-five cents per acre, and section eight provides, that at the expiration of thirty years, these warrants shall be redeemed by the State treasurer in the legal currency of the country, *provided* there shall at that time be no such lands belonging to the State upon which said warrants can be laid.

The operation of these provisions of the law, has been, and must of necessity always be, while any such lands remain unsold, greatly to depreciate the saleable value of these warrants in the money markets of the country, and thus cause the State a much greater outlay in the construction of works paid for in these warrants.

I would respectfully suggest, that another feature of this law demanding revision, is that embraced in section nine, which provides, that "the swamp land warrants authorized to be issued under this act, shall in no case be received in payment for any lands not embraced within the limits of the particular land district in which the works were performed, for which the same were issued in payment." The effect of this provision is to delay and retard the entry and settlement of the swamp and overflowed lands of the State, as, by a provision of the law, (see sec. 11), lands reclaimed under this bill are made subject to entry only by actual settlers; now, if settlers seeking to enter this class of lands with the warrants above referred to, were not confined to the particular district in which the work was done, it could not be but that a much greater facility would be given for the entry and settlement of these lands, and their productive power be thus more speedily utilized to swell the revenues of the State.

Another part of the law, in my opinion, demanding revision, is that in regard to the interest payable upon the said warrants. I would respectfully suggest, that, as the interest on the funded debt of the State, and on the railroad aid

bonds, is by law made payable semi-annually in the city of New York, it would greatly facilitate the payment of the interest on the levee warrants, and at the same time make them much more saleable, if the interest upon them was made payable at the same time and place.

If the above-mentioned features of the original levee law were amended, namely—*first*, that providing that Auditor's swamp land warrants shall be laid upon the swamp and overflowed lands at the expiration of thirty years, provided there be any such lands then belonging to the State upon which said warrants can be laid; *second*, that providing that said warrants shall be laid only on lands in the district in which the work was done; *third*, that making the interest payable annually—it could not, in my opinion, fail of resulting in a very great saving to the State, and greatly increased facility in the carrying on of its public works.

I would further suggest to your Excellency the desirability of such a change in the law as would make all funds received by the State for swamp and overflowed lands, a sinking fund for the gradual redemption of these warrants and the payment of the interest thereon; and that any internal improvement money in the treasury, together with that collected hereafter as tax to pay the interest on said swamp land warrants be incorporated therewith, and used for the same purposes.

This office has been retarded in the prosecution of important works by the meagerness of the appropriation to pay engineers, it being but twenty-five hundred dollars per year, or about two hundred dollars per month in Auditor's warrants—equal to about one hundred and fifty dollars in money—which is as small a salary as any good engineer can be hired at, while the works in hand within the past year have been sufficient to have kept constantly employed three engineers. The law (sec. 3, page 82, acts adj'd sess., 1868–9) makes this appropriation only an aid or loan, until the tax for each work can be collected from lands benefited by the work. The delay of pay until the tax could be collected, caused many good engineers to decline doing work under the law, much to the injury of

the public works, and causing delays that have been detrimental to the agricultural interests of the State.

If I failed to call your Excellency's attention to the foregoing points in the law, I should, in my opinion, neglect to perform an important duty to the State.

PENITENTIARY.

The cost to the State of the Penitentiary since April 1, 1869, I have the honor to report as per tables herewith, marked "C" and "D."

Under the act of the General Assembly entitled "An act to amend an act entitled an act for the erection of additional buildings upon the Penitentiary grounds, and for other purposes," I have contracted for and had built upon the Penitentiary grounds additional brick buildings, being a wing to the main or cell building, for dining room, hospital, cooking, etc., and the wing to the warden's building; both of which have been completed according to the plans and specifications specified in the act above referred to, and in a substantial and workmanlike manner.

The cell building of the Penitentiary had in some former time been fully fitted up with steam pipes for heating the building, but no boiler and steam engine had been provided, and in cold winter weather the prisoners suffered with cold. To render the steam pipes serviceable I purchased, with your Excellency's sanction, an engine, boiler, and fixtures thereunto belonging, which will not only serve the purpose of heating the building, but also furnish power which can be used for manufacturing purposes in the institution.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion I would say, that with friendly legislation the levees will, within one year, protect all the north side of the Arkansas River, and the south side as far as the Eddington break near Napoleon. The lower counties fronting on the Mississippi river, to the Louisiana line, will be fully protected;

and those on the upper part of our Mississippi river front mostly safe, while on the White river tens of thousands of acres will be reclaimed in the rich Cache river valley.

Work is also in preparation on the upper St. Francis river, and applications are in the office from Poteau and Ouachita rivers.

The State is waking up fully to the importance of reclaiming the millions of acres of the unequalled rich lands of our river bottoms.

BENJ. THOMAS,
Com. Pub. Works and Int. Impts.

STATEMENT A—Showing condition of such Railroads as have been awarded and received State Aid Bonds.

Names of Roads.	Entire length of line.	Miles graded.	Miles furnished with ties.	Miles furnished with rails.	Miles of State aid awarded.	Amount of Railroad aid bonds received.	Amount of stock in road held by State.	Remarks.
Memphis and Little Rock.....	130	118	118	118	120	$1,050,000	$40,000	Line of road east of Madison unfavorable owing to great depth of overflow.
Little Rock and Fort Smith.....	156	95	85	50	150	800,000	38,125	Will be finished from Chicora to Pine Bluff by March 1, 1871.
L. R. P. B. and N. O.....	125	45	45	15	120	600,000	.....none	
M. O. and R. R.....	160	45	40	15	130	300,000	210,500	Track well laid with fish plates and bolts. Road generally very straight.
Cairo and Fulton.....	301	20	....	....	300	.....	.....	
Little Rock and Helena.....	98	....	....	....	30	.....	.....	
Amounts.....	970	323	298	198	850	$1,175,000	$288,625	

STATEMENT B,—Showing extent and cost of Levee Work completed under original and supplementary Levee bills.

December 15, 1870.	Entire length in miles and parts of miles.		Completed length in miles and parts of miles.		Cost of construction.		Total cost of work completed.
Names of Works.					Amount paid in Auditor's swamp land warrants, as per original levee bill.	Amount paid in County orders, as per supplementary bill	
	Miles.	Ft.	Miles.	Ft.			
Reeves Cut Off		2,200		2,200	.....	$6,051 71	$6,051 71
Plum Bayou		489		489	.....	5,301 44	5,301 44
Flat Bayou		292		292	.....	4,901 39	4,901 39
Terry's Ferry		3,620		3,620	.....	14,092 50	14,092 50
Silver Lake Crevasse		1,715		1,715	$18,519 33	18,519 28	37,038 61
New Gascony	2	2640		3,700	36,929 93	.....	36,929 93
Collins Breaks		587		587	.....	3,427 50	3,427 50
Helena Levee	19	4,867	3	2,640	.....	16,761 04	16,761 04
Memphis and St. Louis R. R. Company	3	2,720	3	2,720	13,163 97	.....	13,163 97
Red Fork Levee	10	200	9	2,840	52,750 63	144,910 65	197,661 28
W. R. V. and T. R. R. Company		3,270		3,270	10,900 00	.....	10,900 00
L. R. P. B. and N. O. R. R. Company	*33	174	*33	174	159,687 70	.....	159,687 70
Totals	71	1,654	52	3,027	$291,951 56	$213,965 51	$505,917 07

* More completed, but not paid for.
† About.

STATEMENT B, No. 2.

Showing amount of Levee work under contract and in process of construction, and upon which no payments have been made.

NAMES OF WORKS.	Length in Miles and Feet	
	Miles.	Feet.
Crawford County Ditches	2	.....
Chicot County Levee	30	1,320
Bankhead Levee	.....	5,200
Hensley Cut-Off	.....	1,450
Amount	33	1,490

STATEMENT B, No. 3.

Showing amount of Levee work remaining undone, and yet to be completed.

NAMES OF WORKS.	Length in Miles and Feet.	
	Miles.	Feet.
Jefferson Lake Levee	5	.....
Yonkepin Lake Levee	4	.....
Frent Clay Levee	3	2,640
Ash Flat and Old River Levee	1	2,917
Bayou Metoe	22	175
Old River and Villemont Township Levee	.....	7,422
Nobles' Bayou Levee	.....	2,726
Fourche Bayou	25	.....
Amount	62	532

STATEMENT C.

Showing expenses of Arkansas State Penitentiary, for sustenance of convicts, from April 1, 1869, to December 1, 1870.

1869.		
Account for month of April	$265 30	
do do May	766 85	
do do June	830 20	
do do July	886 20	—2,748 55
do do August	880 60	
do do September	839 65	
do do October	842 45	
do do November	861 05	—3,423 75
do do December	961 10	
1870.		
Account for month of January	991 55	
do do February	838 60	
do do March	910 70	
do do April	877 45	—4,579 40
do do May	875 35	
do do June	947 80	
do do July	1,052 10	
do do August	1,028 65	
do do September	964 25	
do do October	1,022 35	
do do November	1,048 95	—6,939 45
Amount total		$17,691 15

STATEMENT D.

Showing expenses of Arkansas State Penitentiary, for new buildings and engine, from April 1, 1869, to December 15, 1870.

May 31, 1869, New building	$100 00	
June 14, do do	4,765 00	
July, 27, do do	4,129 60	
August 31, do do	5,860 00	
Dec. 24, do do	4,025 00	
April 7, 1870, do	2,598 00	
April 7, do do	4,390 00	
May 10, do do	1,925 00	—27,792 60
December, 1869, engine and boiler furnished, and placed in the Penitentiary		2,776 28
Amount total		$30,568 88

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT.

OFFICE COMMISSIONER PUBLIC WORKS,
January 3d, 1871.

His Excellency POWELL CLAYTON,
Governor of the State of Arkansas.

SIR—In my official report of December 15, 1870, I omitted to state the amount per mile of State aid awarded to railroads in this State, I now beg leave to give you that information as the same appears of record in my office, to-wit:

Cairo and Fulton Railroad, 300 miles, at rate of $10,000 per mile, $3,000,000.

Little Rock and Fort Smith Railroad, 150 miles, at rate of $10,000 per mile, 1,500,000.

Memphis and Little Rock Railroad, 120 miles, at rate of $10,000 per mile, $1,200,000.

Little Rock, Pine Bluff and New Orleans Railroad, 120 miles at rate of $15,000 per mile, $1,800,000.

Mississippi, Ouachita and Red River Railroad, 130 miles at $15,000 per mile, $1,950,000.

Little Rock and Helena Railroad, 30 miles, at rate of $15,000 per mile, $450,000.

Respectfully, BENJ. THOMAS,
Commissioner Public Works, &c.